establishments who were offering/giving better benefits to workers from the purview of the Employees State Insurance (ESI) Act; as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 20th January, 1997;

(b) whether the General Secretary of AITUC has taken exception to amendment to the ESI Act increasing the salary ceiling from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 6,500 and termed this amendment as 'unkind act' and threatened to go on strike; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The wage ceiling for coverage under the ESI Act, 1948 has been revised from time to time. It was last revised from Rs. 1600/- to Rs. 3000/- per month w.e.f. 1.4.92. Since then there has been significant increase in wages. Consequently a large number of employees have gone out the ESI Scheme. The Labour Minister's Conference of Major States in a meeting held on 4.10.96 recommended enhancement of the wage ceiling for coverage under the ESI Scheme from Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 6500/- per month. The ESI Corporation which is a tripartite body comprising inter-alia 10 representatives of Central Trade Union Organisations including AITUC also considered and recommended the proposal in its meeting held on 5.10.96. The Central Government accepted the recommendation and enhanced the wage ceiling under the ESI Scheme from Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 6500/- per month with effect from 1.1.97. As such the action taken by the Government in this regard is timely and in larger interest of the workers.

Revising of rates of Royalty on Minerals

992. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of MINES to be please to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken any decision to revise the rates of royalty on minerals;

(b) if so, the details of minerals covered

(c) whether the State Governments have been consulted in this regard; and

(d) the details of revision of royalty on each of the minerals so decided by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (d) The Central Government constituted a Study Group on 30.1.95 for carrying out detailed review of rates of royalty and dead rent applicable to major minerals (other than Coal, lignite and sand for stowing) enumerated in the Second Schedule of the Mines & Minerals (Regulation & Development) Act, 1957. The Study Group had Members from some of the important mineral producting States and also had consultation with all the State Governments before submitting its Report. The proposal for Revision of Royalty Rates is under consideration of the Government.

देश की खनिज सम्पदा का ह्रास होना

993. **श्री अजीत जोगी:** क्या खान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या देश की खनिज सम्पदा का निरंतर ह्रास हो रहा है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो उसके क्या कारण हैं;

(ग) देश में खनिज सम्पदा की खोज का कार्य बढ़ाने हेतु क्या कदम उठाए गए हैं; और

(घ) क्या सरकार खनिज की खोज का कार्य विदेशियों को सौंपने का विचार रखती है और यदि हां, तो उसका ब्यौरा क्या है?

इस्पात मंत्री तथा खान मंत्री (श्री बीरेन्द्र प्रसाद बैश्य): (क) और (ख) खनिज देश के ऐसे संसाधन हैं जिनका नवीकरण नहीं किया जा सकता। खनिज सम्पदा का ह्रास विदोहित की गई मात्रा के अनुपात में है।

(ग) और (घ) भारतीय भूवैज्ञानिक सर्वेक्षण देश में गवेषण संबंधी कार्य करने वाला प्रमुख संगठन है और पूरे देश में खनिजों के गवेषण के लिए इसके नियमित कार्यक्रम हैं। इसके अलावा, संबंधित राज्य सरकारों के खान और भू-विज्ञान निदेशालयों द्वारा भी गवेषण कार्य किया जाता है। खनिज रियायतों की मंजूरी खान और खनिज (विनियमन और विकास) अधिनियम-1957 के प्रावधानों

है। राष्ट्रीय खनिज नीति, 1993 का मूल उद्देश्य देश में खनिज संपदा का पता लगाने के लिए गवेषण करना है। राष्ट्रीय खनिज नीति, 1993 के अंतर्गत केन्द्र सरकार ने खनिज क्षेत्र में निजी क्षेत्र निवेशों और आधुनिक प्रौद्योगिकी को बढ़ावा देने के लिए कानून में संशोधन करने के साथ-साथ अन्य अनेक कदम उठाए हैं। सरकार ने निजी क्षेत्र निवेश के माध्यम से हवाई सर्वेक्षण के लिए बड़े क्षेत्र की अनुमति देने के लिए दिशा-निर्देश भी जारी किए हैं।

Surveys for Diamond Deposits

994. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Geological Survey of India has confirmed that diamond deposits were found in Bastar district recently;

(b) the establishment quantity of these deposits;

(c) whether samples of diamonds have been sent for laboratory testing;

(d) if so, the results thereof;

(e) whether surveys in other areas have been conducted, if so, the names of areas and the results of the surveys;

(f) the estimated commercial value of the reserves; and

(g) whether there is any plan to give mining rights to private companies?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) Geological Survey of India has not confirmed any diamond deposit in Baster district recently.

(b) to (d) Questions do not arise.

(e) Investigation for diamond has been carried out in the south-eastern part of Raipur district during Field Seasons 1992—94 and five kimberlite pipes, the source rocks for diamond, have been located in Bahradih-Payalikhand area out of which three pipes are found to be diamond bearing. In Raigarh district prospecting work is being carried out since 1993-94 and incidences of diamond have been noted in three streams of IB, Maini and Manda. GSI had also conducted surveys for diamond and kimberlite/lamporite, the possible source rock of diamond in parts of Panna, diamond belt in Panna and adjoining Satna, Chattarpur Sagar and Damoh districts and in Rajpur and Raigarh districts of Madhya Pradesh. During the eighties, under the National Diamond Project, GSI carried out assessment of the Kimberlite pipes and conglomerates in the Panna diamond belt.

(f) Question does not arise as no assessment of diamond reserve and grade has been made by GSI.

(g) No prospecting licences have been granted to any party in the public or private sector in Madhya Pradesh.

External commercial borrowing by SAIL

995. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Steel Authority of India Limited has forwarded its request to the Union Finance Ministry to go in for more external commercial borrowing for its capital expenditure programme in the Ninth Plan;

(b) if so, the internal resources proposed to be tapped;

(c) the growth of GDP planned; and

(d) the reaction of Government to the plan submitted?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The National Development Council (NDC) has resolved to adopt the growth rate of 7% per annum for the 9th Plan. SAIL proposes to invest about Rs. 15,000 crores on capital schemes during the 9th Plan period depending upon techno-economic feasibility of individual schemes. It is estimated that SAIL would internally generate about Rs. 10,200 crores (gross) and the balance would be raised from domestic or international capital market depending upon the market conditions prevailing at the time of actual raising of funds and regulatory approvals available to the company. Government have yet to approve the SAIL's 9th Five Year Plan.